

Pentagon Officials on Trump's Deportation Plan: "Absolutely Insane"

Trump campaigned on mass deportations. Now he's threatening to use the U.S. military to carry them out.

By [Nick Turse](#)

Global Research, November 21, 2024

[The Intercept](#) 19 November 2024

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

***Donald Trump** campaigned on the promise of mass deportations, and on Monday, he said that his administration would use the U.S. military to carry out this expulsion of millions of people, many of whom have lived in America for years or even decades.*

The U.S. military historically has not conducted immigration enforcement and does not normally conduct law enforcement functions.

But when Tom Fitton, president of the conservative group Judicial Watch, posted on social media that the next administration "will use military assets to reverse the Biden invasion through a mass deportation program," Trump [responded](#): "TRUE!!!"

Texas **Gov. Greg Abbott** has already pursued the legal strategy of declaring the flow of immigrants an "invasion," [arguing that](#) the federal government has failed in its constitutional duty to protect states from foreign powers and that Texas should have the right to use its National Guard as a deportation force. Republican lawmakers in Arizona have [argued the same](#). Trump has also previously suggested he would rely on wartime powers to carry out his plan.

The Pentagon was publicly dismissive of Trump's pledge to employ the military to conduct mass deportations.

"The Department does not comment on hypotheticals or speculate on what may occur," a Defense Department spokesperson told The Intercept.

Behind the scenes, officials were exasperated.

"It's absolutely insane," said one Pentagon official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak with the press on the matter. "I never thought I'd see the day when this was a 'serious' — put that in scare quotes — policy."

He said that the legal and logistical hurdles would be immense, and the proposal was "unrealistic and unserious."

Another Defense Department official in a different office, who was also not authorized to speak with the press, had almost exactly the same reaction.

“It’s insanity,” he said of Trump’s announcement.

“ON DAY ONE I will launch the largest deportation program in American history to get the criminals out,” [Trump said](#) during a rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City in the final days of the presidential campaign. “I will rescue every city and town that has been invaded and conquered, and we will put these vicious and bloodthirsty criminals in jail, then kick them the hell out of our country as fast as possible.”

In a prior campaign speech, Trump said his administration would follow “[the Eisenhower model](#),” referencing a 1954 campaign, whose name was also an ethnic slur, to round up and expel Mexican immigrants: “[Operation Wetback](#).” About [1 million](#) Mexicans and even [some Americans of Mexican descent](#) were deported.

Trump’s “border czar” **Thomas Homan**, who was Trump’s acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement during his first administration, also referenced plans to use U.S. troops during a Monday appearance on Fox News’s “America Reports.”

“So I’ve been asked a thousand times: How many people can you remove the first year? Well, how many agents do I have?” [said Homan](#). “How many buses do I have? How much money do I have for airplanes? Right? Can DOD assist? Because DOD can take a lot off our plate.”

“I want to know how he’s going to pay for it?” the first Pentagon official who spoke to The Intercept asked. Homan has been light on details. When Cecilia Vega of “60 Minutes” confronted him with an estimate that it would cost \$88 billion to deport a million people a year, Homan evaded the question. “I don’t know if that’s accurate or not,” [he replied](#). “What price do you put on national security?”

There are an estimated 13 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. A onetime mass deportation operation would cost at least \$315 billion, according to a recent analysis from the [American Immigration Council](#). A longer-term project involving arrests, processing, and deportations would cost around \$968 billion over more than 10 years. The report emphasizes that this is a “highly conservative” estimate. It does not take into account the likelihood that this deportation operation of 13 million people would require the construction and staffing of detention facilities on a scale that dwarfs the current U.S. prison system, which held 1.9 million people all told in 2022 — let alone the effect of removing [an estimated](#) 5 percent of the American workforce from the country, who collectively pay over \$105 billion in taxes each year.

Trump’s spokespeople did not respond to The Intercept’s request for more details on the cost of the plan or exactly how the military would be employed in the deportation process before publication.

In 2023, Trump’s top immigration policy adviser, [Stephen Miller](#), indicated that military funding would be used to build “vast holding facilities that would function as staging centers” for immigrants awaiting deportations. Throughout the presidential race, Trump also vowed to mobilize the National Guard to assist with his planned expulsions. [Experts say](#) that military involvement in any deportation plan would mark a fundamental shift for the armed forces, which do not normally conduct domestic law enforcement operations.

Trump has also said he would invoke the [Alien Enemies Act of 1798](#), to expel suspected

members of drug cartels without due process. That archaic law allows for summary deportation of people from countries with which the U.S. is at war, that have invaded the United States, or have committed “predatory incursions.”

“President-elect Trump will soon have the full power of the U.S. government machinery at his disposal to target and displace immigrants at a scale our nation has never experienced,” Anthony D. Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement. “As we ready litigation and create firewalls for freedom across blue states, we must also sound the alarm that what’s on the horizon will change the very nature of American life for tens of millions of Americans.”

During his first term, Trump deported about 1.5 million immigrants, according to an analysis by the [Migration Policy Institute](#). The Biden administration is on pace to match that number.

*

Click the share button below to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

[Don't Miss Out on Global Research Online e-Books!](#)

Featured image: On Mexico's Children's Day families gather on the U.S. side of Monument Mesa to see family through the US-Mexico barrier (Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)

The original source of this article is [The Intercept](#)
Copyright © [Nick Turse](#), [The Intercept](#), 2024

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Nick Turse](#)**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca